

LISTERIA & PREGNANCY



What is Listeria?

Listeria is a type of bacteria that is found in water and soil. The illness from ingesting listeria is called **LISTERIA INFECTION** or **LISTERIOSIS**.

What are the symptoms of listeriosis?

Pregnant women usually only have mild flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, muscle aches, diarrhea and upset stomach. Infections during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery and life threatening illness in the newborn.

Who gets listeriosis?

Anyone can get listeriosis but pregnant women are about 13 times more likely than healthy adults to get the infection. According to the CDC, 1 in 6 of all listeriosis cases occur in pregnant women.

How do you get listeriosis?

You get listeriosis by eating foods contaminated with *Listeria* bacteria. Babies can be born with listeriosis if their mother ate contaminated food during pregnancy. *Listeria* bacteria can contaminate a variety of foods but is easily killed by cooking or pasteurization. The most likely foods to have *Listeria* bacteria include **refrigerated, ready to eat foods** such as:

- Deli Meats
- Packaged hot dogs
- Refrigerated meat spreads
- Smoked seafood
- Unpasteurized dairy products
- Pre-cut fruits
- Uncooked meats and vegetables

How is listeriosis treated?

Listeriosis is treated with antibiotics during pregnancy. These antibiotics, in most cases, will prevent infection to the fetus and newborn. These same antibiotics are also given to newborns with listeriosis.

What can I do to protect my baby from listeriosis?

There are several small changes you can make to greatly reduce your risk of infection:

1. Do not eat lunch meats, hot dogs, cold cuts or sausages unless they have been heated to steaming hot just before serving (internal temperature of 165°F).

2. Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood or meat spreads (including chicken salad) from the deli counter or from refrigerated section of a store. Foods that do not need refrigeration, like canned products are safe. Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, pork, or poultry
3. Do not eat soft cheese such as feta, queso blanco, queso fresco, brie, Camembert, blue-veined or panela unless it is labeled "MADE WITH PASTEURIZED MILK." Hard cheeses such as cheddar and parmesan, semi-soft cheeses such as mozzarella, pasteurized processed cheese slices and spreads, cream cheese, and cottage cheese made from pasteurized milk and/or properly aged are safe.
4. Wash the outside of melons prior to cutting. Avoid eating pre-cut melons, such as fruit salad unless it was cut immediately before consuming.
5. Do not consume unpasteurized or "raw" milk products unless in cooked products.
6. Practice standard food safety recommendations such as:
 - Wash all fruits and vegetables;
 - Keep everything clean including your hands and preparation surfaces;
 - Keep your refrigerator thermometer at 40 degrees or below;
 - Clean your refrigerator often;
 - Avoid cross-contamination of raw and cooked foods (including hot dog juices);
 - Cook foods to proper temperatures (use food thermometers) and reheat all foods until they are steaming hot (or 165 F). *Listeria* is killed by pasteurization and cooking.

Sources

<http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancycomplications/listeria.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/>

<http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/healtheducators/ucm083320.htm>

